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LYALL, WILLIAM ROWE

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LONDON

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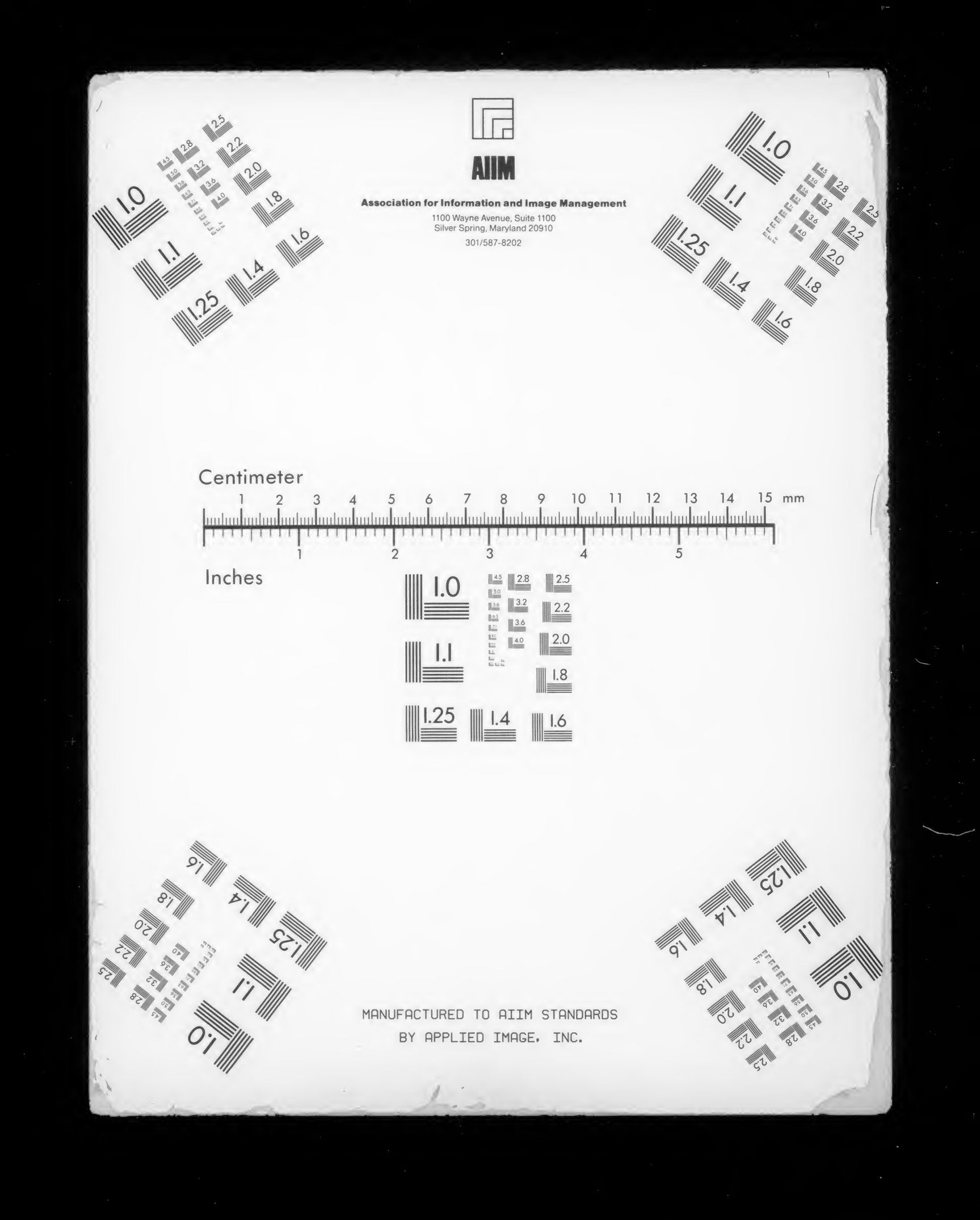
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THE NATURE AND TRUE VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY EXAMINED,

IN A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF COLCHESTER,

IN JUNE, MDCCCXXXI.

BY

WILLIAM ROWE LYALL, A.M.

ARCHDEACON OF COLCHESTER;

RECTOR OF FAIRSTED AND WEELEY, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

AND WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

1831.

TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF COLCHESTER,

THIS CHARGE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THEM, AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,

W. R. LYALL.

Fairsted Rectory,
June 21, 1831.

A

CHARGE,

&c.

Reverend Brethren,

As we are assembled together to-day, in compliance with an order of the Church to which we belong, I am unwilling that we should separate, without a few words on my part, conveying to you my thanks for your attendance; and, at the same time, availing myself of the opportunity it affords me, of offering some remarks on one or two points, about which it may be presumed that we feel a common interest.

It is now three years since I held my last general visitation. Our customary assembly was prevented last year by the visitation of the Diocesan, as it was superseded the year before by the parochial visitation which I then made, for the second time since my appointment to the office of your Archdeacon. And I cannot advert to this last, without indulging my own feelings, by expressing the gratification which I derived from the neatness and

good order in which I found the several churches. The compliance with the directions which I had left at my former parochial visitation, four years before, had been so full, as well as so general, that I had little other duty to perform, except that most pleasing duty of thanking the churchwardens for the attention which they had paid to theirs; and I am rejoiced to have it in my power to renew those thanks to the churchwardens collectively, and in this more public manner. There was, indeed, one parish, in the Tendring Hundred, which declined to acknowledge my authority; and after every means of persuasion and expostulation had been tried by me in vain, I was compelled, at length, to institute proceedings at law. The consequence has been, that, after an expenditure of many hundred pounds on their part, and which I fear has fallen principally upon individuals, and some considerable expense on mine, the parish has been obliged to make an unqualified submission. It has been a subject of some vexation both to them and to me; but I trust that all angry feelings will now be buried in oblivion; and only so much of what has past be remembered, as may serve to prevent a recurrence of any similar unpleasantness.

There was another point to which my attention was strongly drawn, during my last parochial visitation; and that was the numerous indications of a desire for increased church room, often in the towns, but more frequently still in the agricultural

districts. This effect was encouraged, no doubt, by the increased comfort of most of the churches, subsequent to my first parochial visitation; but the true cause, unquestionably, is to be sought in the zeal and increasing exertions of the clergy, whose attention to their duties, and whose general efficiency in this part of the diocese, it would be most grateful to my feelings to enlarge upon, except that they are too well known by all who hear me, to need any testimony on my part.

And here, before I quit this subject, I must be allowed to discharge the duty which I feel, of publicly expressing the obligations which many parishes of this archdeaconry are under to the "Society in London for enlarging and rebuilding Churches," for the liberal assistance which was afforded by it, towards the object I am alluding to,—an obligation which was, in every instance, enhanced by the prompt and ready manner in which the aid solicited was granted. It is a society, indeed, which has peculiar claims upon the gratitude of this part of the diocese. The amount of assistance which this archdeaconry alone has drawn from its funds, even within the limited period of my connection with it, already exceeds many hundred pounds; and the instances are numerous, in which it would have been impossible for the churchwardens and parishioners to have carried their designs into effect, except for the timely support which was thus supplied.

I am not, at the present moment, aware of any other points connected with our local interests, in which we, of this archdeaconry, may be supposed to be particularly concerned. As far as my knowledge extends, the condition of the several churches, the conduct of the clergy, the extension of schools, both for daily and weekly instruction, the harmony and good feeling which prevail among ourselves, are all as they ought to be, and as the friends of religion would wish to see them. Indeed, I believe, that we might extend the remark to the present state of the Church in general. I do not believe that, since the Reformation, there ever was a period in this country, when the Church of England was more at peace and unity within herself, or possessed stronger claims upon the regard and affections of her members. Never was there a period when there was more learning and talent, more activity and propriety of conduct among her ministers; nor when the great truths of the Gospel were laid more fully before the people, or more zealously enforced. And if the claims of the Church are as great at the present, as they have ever been at any former period, upon the respect and attachment of her own members, her claims to forbearance, at least, and to the absence of all acrimonious opposition, from those who dissent from her doctrine or discipline, are not less evident; for the toleration which they enjoy is at present complete and entire. And yet, with all these grounds on which we might reasonably build the hope of peace, both from

within and from without, it cannot be dissembled that there has not been, for many years past, a period when the Church of England had more reason for disquietude.

It is not, as in former times, the doctrines which the Church teaches, nor the piety of her discipline, which are called in question:—it is the revenues she possesses, and the fancied riches of the clergy, which is now the subject of contention. A sorry controversy this for Christians to be engaged in! where the oppression of individuals is the victory to be contended for; and in which wrong and violence stand in the place of learning and argument. But the debate is not of our choosing; and though it would ill become us "to return railing for railing;" yet neither would it become us to shrink from the defence of the temporal interests of the Church, whose ministers we are; nor to acquiesce, by our silence, in the truth of those representations, by which the public mind is so strangely misled.

With respect to those who professedly are the enemies of the clergy, only because they are the enemies of religion; and who avowedly look only to the sordid advantages that might be obtained by the appropriation of their property, it would, I fear, be attended with but little advantage were I to endeavour to point out the injustice of such views, the mischief or the sinfulness of the objects they propose;—for such topics are excluded by the very

terms of the argument. If ever the time should arrive, when persons who think and feel in this manner, shall form the most powerful party in the State; that is to say, when the country in which we live shall be no longer that England which is now the object of our pride and affection,—the revenues of the Church, I suppose, will fall a prey to rapacity. But when that time comes, other property will have to look round for protection besides ecclesiastical; and the property of the Church will have the precedency, simply because its possessors may be more easily oppressed than the holders of other property, not because the rights on which it is founded are more doubtful.

There are, no doubt, a large number of persons who join in this most unworthy warfare which is waged against the Church, who would yet disclaim any participation in such motives as I am here speaking of:—persons who justify their desire to suppress the legal establishment of religion, under the pretence that such establishments are injurious to the true interests of Christianity. But unwilling as I am to attribute to any persons opinions and motives which they disavow, yet it is certainly difficult to believe that such persons, if they be serious, can at the same time be sincere. For to say nothing of the unholy alliance which they have entered into, with those who professedly prosecute the common object with very different views and feelings; yet that object itself is one which I

cannot persuade myself any religious man would pursue, whose religion was not rather the name of the political party to which he belonged, than of his Christian denomination.

The legal establishment of Christianity may not be necessary to the maintenance of religion in a country: but to say that it is not useful, still more to say that it is injurious, would seem to be a proposition easily hazarded, no doubt, by a bold man, but which has as little support from reason as it has from experience. It would lead me too far away from the immediate subject, which I propose to myself in my present address, I mean the revenues of the Church of England, were I to enter at large upon the consideration of this point; but so far I may venture to assert as a thing quite certain: that whatever might be the case in large towns, where a ministry might *perhaps* be supported, by the respective congregations, in sufficient number for the spiritual wants of the people; yet that the maintenance of a *parochial* clergy, by such means, would be altogether impossible. Viewing the country at large, particular spots might continue to enjoy the advantages of Christian cultivation; but such spots would be rare and occasional, few and far between. And instead of that uniform and equally diffused ministration of the word and ordinances which is now amongst the greatest blessings of this favoured land; we should behold long and dreary tracts, where the sound of a Sabbath-bell had been never heard;

and where not only no religious instruction had ever penetrated, but where the occasional missionary would not find so much as even the desire for it, on the part of an uninformed and half-heathen population.

In answer to this, however, we shall be reminded of the United States of America. There is no Established Church in that country, we are told; and yet the knowledge of Christianity is still preserved among her people. It is very true that there is no Established Church in that country; but neither have the Americans a king, nor an hereditary nobility; and why, without further enquiry, we are to seek examples from them in matters of religion, more than in matters of civil government, I am yet to learn. But they who speak with so little doubt or hesitation of the advantages which America derives from the absence of any established form of religion, forget to tell us what is the actual state of religion among her population; although this, in point of fact, is the whole subject in question. No one pretends that Christianity cannot exist, except where there is an Established Church; the doubt is, as to the state in which it will be found, under such circumstances, among the people at large. Let us then hear the language in which their own writers express themselves on this subject, as they may be supposed to reason with better knowledge of the facts, than the writers of mere party pamphlets are likely to

possess. It would be easy to accumulate extracts on this head, but I shall content myself with two, as specimens of a much larger number which might easily be produced. The first from Mr. Bristed, the author of the work called *America and her Resources;* the other from Dr. Mason's *Plea for Catholic Communion:* both of them writers of unimpeachable credit, and warmly attached to the country of their birth. "*Full three millions of our people,*" says the first-mentioned writer, that is, more than one-third of the then population of the United States, "*are altogether destitute of Christian ordinances; and as the population of this country increases with a rapidity hitherto unexampled in the history of nations, unless some effectual means be adopted to spread the light of the Gospel over those sections of the union which now lie prostrate in all the darkness of unregenerated depravity, before half a century shall have elapsed, our federative republic will number within its bosom more than twenty millions of unbaptized infidels.*" You see then what are the effects of leaving the support of religion to the free bounty of the people, as it respects the ministration of the word and ordinances of the Gospel; I shall next present you with an extract to shew what are the *consequences* of this state of things, as regards the religious condition of the *community.* "*Sanctuary,*" says Dr. Mason, speaking of the western portion of the union, "*they have none; they lose by degrees their anxiety for the institutions of Christ; their feeble substitutes, the small social meetings, without*

the minister of grace, soon die away; their Sabbaths are Pagan; their children grow up in ignorance, vice, and unbelief; their land, which smiles around them like a garden of Eden, presents one unbroken scene of spiritual desolation. In the course of one or two generations the knowledge of God is almost obliterated; the name of Jesus is a foreign sound; his salvation an occult science . . . . . We have already a population of some millions of our own colour, flesh and blood, nearly as destitute of evangelical mercies, as the savage who yells on the banks of the Missouri."

It is a notorious fact that, with the exception of that large and rapidly increasing body of religionists in America, who have retained the doctrines and the liturgy of the English Episcopal Church, the number of Orthodox Christians in the United States, instead of increasing, is becoming every day less; the Presbyterian and Independent congregations falling off into open Socinianism, and the other denominations being chiefly distinguished by the different shapes in which the extravagance of their opinions displays itself. But I am not, at present, considering the usefulness of an Established Church, as the means of keeping alive a pure and orthodox faith; I am speaking of it simply as that, without which the knowledge of religion, if preserved at all, can only be diffused partially among the people; and the extracts which I have produced are sufficient to shew, that the conclusion which I meant to

draw, instead of being disproved by the example of America, receives from thence, according to the evidence of American writers themselves, its most striking confirmation.

But it may perhaps be said, (and I hope truly), that the opinion of those, who desire to suppress the existence of an Established Church altogether, is confined to a few persons; that which is the subject of a general complaint, is the unnecessary wealth of the clergy, the enormous expense of the present establishment.

The enormous expense of the present establishment! Now, supposing it to be as great as is generally stated, yet expense to whom I would ask. Not to the poor; that is not pretended. Not to the householders in our large towns; for they contribute nothing to the support of the clergy, except in the shape of fees for services actually performed. Not to the farmer; for he is quite aware that what he pays in tithes is subtracted from his rent, and would be added to it were there no Church to be maintained. Not to the landowner; for if the tithes were done away to-morrow, he cannot be so ignorant as to suppose that they would be made a present of to him. Not to the State; for the tithes never belonged to the State. The documents are innumerable which still exist, with the very names of the individuals by whom

they were allotted to the Church [1], many hundred years, for the most part, before the land from which they accrue, came into the possession of the ancestors of any persons now alive. As well might we talk of the expense which the State is at, in our universities and public schools, in our hospitals and alms-houses; all of which, like the Church, are institutions for the public use, but which are supported by property that belonged to individuals. As well, indeed, might we talk of the expense to the State of supporting an hereditary nobility, or a class of private gentlemen.

The difference between the property of a clergy-

[1] If the reader wishes to satisfy himself on this point, he may consult Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum, and Selden on Tithes, ch. xi. The following are a few instances of parishes within this archdeaconry to be found in Newcourt's Repertorium. Audley, endowed by Robert de Ram in the reign of King Stephen. Ashdon was endowed in the reign of William I. by Ganfredus and Radulphus Baynard. Great Badfield, in 1090, by Gilbert de Clare. Great Bentley, about the same time, by Alberic de Vere. Great Clacton, by Richard de Beauvys or de Belmeis. Coggeshall, by Earl Godwin (with the tithes of Stisted) in the time of Edward the Confessor. Elsenham, by Beatrix de Say, in 1200. White Notley, by Roger Bigod, in the reign of William I. Black Notley, by Walter de Mandeville, in 1218. Rickling, by Geoffry de Say, in the reign of Henry II. Weeley, by Edgiva, a noble Saxon lady, in the time of Edward the Confessor. It would be easy to extend the number of examples; and even to produce the very words of the endowments, many of which are given at length by Newcourt.

man and that of a private gentleman, is not, that the one belongs to the State, and that the other is a man's own; for more than two-thirds [1] of all the benefices in England are the property of individuals, and part of their estate; and as the remainder are enjoyed under the sanctity of laws, which acknowledge no such distinction, the tithes belong to the clergyman by precisely the same right as the rent does to the landlord. The difference is this; the private gentleman has no clauses in his lease compelling him to the performance of any duties; he enjoys his estate *gratis;* the clergyman is obliged to preach the word and to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, and is expected, moreover, to set an example in his own person of those duties which he teaches others. The private gentleman may spend his estate not only how he pleases, but where he pleases—in London, at Paris, or in Rome; the clergyman must spend his at home and upon the spot. The private gentleman obtains his property merely by the accidental circumstance of his birth; but the property of the Church is a property to be obtained not by inheritance, but by learning, and talents, and virtue. And if there are cases where other claims besides these are attended to, this is not the fault of the Church, but of the civil govern-

[1] The following is given by Dr. Yates as the distribution of the patronage of the Church: the Crown presents to 1041 benefices; the Bishops to 1303; Deans and Chapters to 1037; the Universities to 683; private individuals, to 7936.

ment; and of those into whose hands the law of the land has entrusted the distribution of ecclesiastical patronage; a fault which the Church has no interest in encouraging, but which she would most gladly see amended and restrained.

But after all that can be said on this last subject, how large a share of the emoluments of the Church and of its highest dignities have been held, and are at this moment held, by those who had no other claim, except that of merit? How many bishoprics are at this moment held by persons whose fathers were in very humble stations of life; and, if we go back a few years, even by persons who were born in the class of dissenters, and whose fathers brought them up to the Church rather than to the ministry among their own people, as thinking that it offered a fairer field for their talents? This surely would account for persons in the middle ranks of life, whether farmers, or tradesmen, or merchants, being more than reasonably tenacious of a property like this, which, in fact, belongs to the people of England at large:—for according to the view here taken, the dignities of the Church are so many paths between the lower and upper classes of society, and by means of which the son of the humblest man may rise to take his seat among the nobility of the land:—but to call this a popular grievance, to assign the jealousy of such dignities as a reason for wishing to do away with this description of property, and to merge it in the hereditary property

of the land, is only a proof, if proof were wanting, of the extreme blindness of party spirit. For one should suppose that it required but little common sense, to see that every man is interested in opposing all attempts to destroy an institution such as I am here speaking of, by means of which, some fixed portion of the rental of the soil is kept free, and set apart to be disposed of, not as all other property is, according to a rule, which shuts out all except the children of its present possessor: but according to a rule, which admits the claims of learning, and talents, and character, in however humble a station they may be found;—a rule, as we have seen, by which no description of persons is or can be injured, while many hundred individuals in every generation are raised by it, to stations of comfort and respectability, and not a few, to some of the highest dignities which the constitution acknowledges.

In every numerous body of men, however upright and honourable as a whole, there will always be found individuals, with whom the prospect of private advantage predominates over the sense of justice; and whose views of what is right and expedient are always limited by the opinion of their own personal interest. It is therefore easy at least to understand, by what process of reasoning a great landowner might desire to abolish tithes and to substitute some mode of paying the clergy, which would throw the charge upon the community at large; for that the

landowner should seek to increase the value of his property by exonerating it from a burthensome clause in his lease, is perfectly intelligible, even if it be not very honest. But it is by no means so easy to understand by what process of reasoning the community at large, that is to say, those who possess no land, and who therefore pay nothing to the Church, should join in promoting such an object: the *immediate* consequence of which would be, to charge themselves with an expense from which, both in law and justice, they are now exempt; and the *ultimate* effect, to shut the door against their own children from one path of advancement in life, which is now open to them and to all.

My wish in the preceding remarks has been merely to shew, that whether the revenues of the clergy be of great or small amount, in no respect would the people of England at large be benefited by transferring them to other hands. The clergyman spends his income on any supposition, even if we suppose the case where he is neglectful of his duties, as much to the advantage of the neighbourhood where he resides, and where he is obliged to reside, as the layman ; and although the tenure, by which he holds his property, be not the same in all respects as that under which the property of the landowner is held, yet the difference, as I have shewn, is one by which the community is benefited, and not injured. There is no other way in which tithes could be injurious to the community, except

by preventing the land from being properly cultivated. But I imagine that the most experienced eye would find it difficult, while travelling through the country, or examining any particular parish, to distinguish those lands which were tithe-free by any criterion of that kind. Such lands do not find more ready occupants, nor even more ready purchasers. So far is it from being true, that the operation of tithes has been injurious in this respect, by preventing the cultivation of inferior lands, that the number of such lands which were forced into cultivation during the period of high prices, is always stated as one of the main causes of the distress under which the agricultural interests have lately laboured. The complaint most commonly made, being, that there have been too many inclosures, not too few—that, in spite of tithes, the temptation to agricultural speculation in this country has been too great, not too little.

But, however imperfectly the true character and operation of Church property may seem to be understood by a large number of persons, the exaggerated statements of its *real value* which are put forth daily, and extensively believed, are deserving of still stronger reprehension; because, there is reason to think that these mis-statements are wilful:—the very discrepancies which are to be found among them shew that they have not been made on any principle of calculation, but are hazarded at random, and merely for temporary purposes; and

that, by persons whose stations in life ought to impose a duty upon them either to be silent on the subject, or to be better informed.

I shall endeavour to lay before you some approximation to the truth, founded, not upon the guesses of public orators, but upon the authority of public documents, and the investigation of men who have devoted their time to the inquiry.

The most elaborate work with which I am acquainted on the subject of Church property is that of Dr. Morgan Cove, which was published originally in 1798; and a third edition of which, adapted to the changes which had then taken place in the value of property, was published in 1816. His first calculations were founded on actual returns from upwards of 3000 livings, between the years 1787 and 1797; and from these returns he states the average value of parochial benefices in England and Wales to be 141*l.* per ann. Combining this average with another taken from the actual value of a considerable number of livings in two particular counties, the one inland, and the other maritime, and both highly cultivated, the annual value appeared to be 154*l.* per ann. And the gross value of parochial livings in England Dr. Cove stated to be 1,350,000*l.* [1]

[1] As I am not in possession of the first edition of Dr. Cove's book, these statements (which do not appear in the edition of 1816) are adopted, on the authority of a very valuable and able little tract, published by the Rev. Augustus Campbell, at Liverpool, in 1822.

This was the value of parochial benefices in the year 1798, at which time the price of wheat, per quarter, was nearly what it is at present, or about 64 shillings. But subsequent to this period a great rise took place in the value of agricultural produce, and, of course, a proportionate increase in the value both of rents and tithes. Dr. Cove, therefore, published a third edition of his work, giving an account of the approximated value of a very extensive number of livings, in the seven years preceding 1816, when the average price of a quarter of wheat was 108 shillings. From the result of this last calculation, it appeared that the value of parochial benefices in England and Wales, as arising out of tithes, had then advanced to 2,031,000*l.*, being an increase, since 1798, of 650,000*l.* in the gross amount; while the average value of the livings themselves had increased to 175*l.* per ann., supposing the number of them to be 12,000—which is considerably beneath the number of the clergy maintained out of the property of the Church, though somewhat larger than the number of benefices.

Now these calculations were founded upon actual returns from a large number of livings; and how very nearly his estimate approached the actual fact we have the means of knowing from a public docu-

ment of unimpeachable authority, namely, the parliamentary returns of the property-tax. By looking to these, we shall find that in 1806 the amount of tithes, lay and ecclesiastical, for England and Wales, amounted to 2,012,064*l.*; in 1808 to 2,139,956*l.*; in 1810 to 2,353,263*l.*; in 1812 to 2,583,263*l.*; in 1814 to 2,732,898*l.*; giving an average for the ten years preceding 1814 of 2,292,287*l.*, or somewhat less than 2,300,000*l.*: and as the price of wheat during the whole of this period was higher than has ever been known in this country, I suppose we may safely assume that neither the value of tithes, nor of any other description of landed property, is greater at present than at that time.

Besides nearly 1500 chapels and chapelries of various sorts, there are in England about 10,650 benefices; viz. 5098 rectories; 3687 vicarages, in which only small tithes are paid; and 1864 donatives and perpetual curacies, which receive no tithes of any kind, but where the land is tithe-free. According to the property-tax returns, it appears that full one-fourth of all the land in England is either tithe-free, or which is nearly the same thing, free upon the payment of a modus. Of the remaining three-fourths of the land about two-fifths are impropriated livings, in the possession either of corporate bodies or of laymen. But as many of the vicarages are endowed, and as others have received augmentations from Queen Ann's bounty to the amount of about 100,000*l.* per ann., we will

subtract one-fourth of the whole amount of the tithes, as constituting that portion of them which is in lay hands. This will leave 1,750,000*l.* as the gross amount of the value of the parochial livings in England and Wales, as arising from tithes only, and exclusive of glebes. At a high valuation, the glebes and the surplice fees (which last constitute the whole income of those livings in London which are not within the city,) have been estimated at 426,000*l.*; which, added to 1,750,000*l.*, will give 2,176,000*l.* as the total amount of income enjoyed by the clergy of England and Wales. Dr. Cove considered that there were 16,000 clergy in England, but this is very much overstated. There is no reason to believe that they greatly exceed 12,000; and taking this number as our divisor, we shall have a result of 181*l.*, as the average amount of the payment which each parochial clergyman receives: the difference between that sum, and their actual expenditure arising not from the Church but from private sources of income.

With respect to the calculation that Dr. Cove has made of the incomes of the bishops, as I have no means of verifying his conclusions (such as the property-tax returns afforded in the case of tithes) I cannot of course state my opinion with equal confidence. But as he appears to have *over-rated* the true amount of the value of ecclesiastical tithes, there is no reason to suppose that he has *under-rated* the amount of the revenues which the bishops

enjoy. As he wrote at a time when the subject was not, as at present, a matter of popular excitement, he had no temptation to deviate from the truth, and I have no doubt of the dependence that may be placed upon his conclusions. His work was the result of the labour of many years—and it has every mark both of fairness and of diligence. According to Dr. Cove, then, the gross revenues of the archbishops and bishops amounted in 1816 to 130,000*l.* per annum; which, divided by twenty-six, will give 5,000*l.* per annum to each bishop. But he states that from this sum must be deducted the payment of diocesan officers, the repairs of episcopal residences, and other outgoings, which he thinks may probably reduce the net revenues of the bishops to about 105,000*l.*, or nearly to 4,000*l.* per ann. for each see. The revenues of the deans and chapters he states at 275,000*l.*, which, if added to the incomes of the parochial clergy, would contribute about 25*l.* per ann. to their incomes; still leaving the whole amount of Church property (exclusive of the revenues of the bishops) at a sum, which, if divided equally among the parochial clergy, both beneficed and unbeneficed, would not give two hundred guineas per ann. to each; and this calculated upon the period when prices were highest.

The proportion of the clergy in Scotland to the whole amount of the population is less than in England; and for this reason the gross revenue of the Scottish Church bears a smaller proportion to

the whole rental of the land. But there is no living in that country under 180*l.* per annum; and the average of the income which the clergy severally enjoy, exclusive of their glebes, is 278*l.* per annum—the number of the clergy being 936, and the whole revenue of the church to which they belong, being made up by parliament to 260,000*l.* In the year 1703, there were in England 5597 livings, returned to parliament as under 50*l.* per annum. From that period to 1815, the governors of Queen Ann's bounty had made augmentations (out of a fund arising directly from within the Church herself,) of 1,464,500*l.* But so late as 1799, in the county of Lincoln alone, 660 livings were returned at only 70*l.* per annum; and even in 1823, Dr. Yates tells us that there were still 3,067 benefices not exceeding 98*l.* per annum, of which 422 were from 10*l.* to 30*l.*; 1207 from 30*l.* to 60*l.*; 645 from 60*l.* to 75*l.*; and 793 from 75*l.* to 98*l.*

The great inequality which is exhibited in the value of the different benefices has, no doubt, its inconveniences; but these inconveniences affect principally the clergy themselves, who are competent judges of their own interest; and so long as no appeals are heard from them to the compassion of the legislature, the sympathy of those whom it does not properly concern, is premature, to say the least: especially, considering the quarters from which the expression of it chiefly proceeds. The only interest which the laity can legitimately feel

in the question of the proper distribution of the property of the Church, is, that it should be such a distribution as will most effectually engage young men of talents and learning, and respectability, to enlist themselves in the ministry. This is the end which the endowments of the Church were intended to answer; and so long as the present distribution of them effectually secures this great object, the laity, at least, can have no reason for complaint. The testimony of one, who is himself a minister of the Church of England, would perhaps weigh but little to this point; and it is therefore with pleasure that I record the attestation of a living writer, whose evidence must be, at least, disinterested and impartial. "*There are many,*" says Dr. Chalmers, of Edinburgh, with a liberality worthy of his piety and high attainments, "*there are many who look with an evil eye to the endowments of the English Church; but to that Church the theological literature of our nation stands indebted, for her best acquisitions; and we hold it a refreshing spectacle at any time that meagre Socinianism pours forth a new supply of flippancy and errors, when we behold, as we have often done, an armed champion come forth, in full equipment, from some high and lettered retreat of that noble hierarchy; nor can we grudge her the wealth of her endowments, when we think how well, under her venerable auspices, the battles of orthodoxy have been fought—that in this holy warfare they are her sons and her scholars, who are foremost in the field—ready at all times to face the threatening mischief,*

and, by the might of their ponderous erudition, to overbear it." Such is the language, and such the feelings, with which a minister of the sister establishment in Scotland—himself the brightest ornament of that establishment—has spoken of the English hierarchy, and of those endowments which have lately been made a topic of so much ignorant misrepresentation. No doubt if the revenues of the Church were divided equally among the clergy, it would afford a considerably larger provision to each than many individuals of the body now possess. But it would not afford such a provision, if so divided, as would secure to the Church a constant succession of candidates for the ministry, of the same high attainments and liberal education, as is now obtained: certainly not such a provision as parents and guardians of the upper classes of society would be satisfied to look to as a prospect for their children. And this is a point of great importance; for though God forbid it should be thought that high birth and wealthy connections are necessary qualifications for the ministry of Christ; yet neither are they hindrances to the due discharge of the ministerial duties; and, surely, it is not desirable, at a time when every other profession and walk in life is filled with the children of our gentry, that none should be found to minister in holy things except persons taken from the body of the people. The admixture of so many persons belonging to the upper classes of society through all the ranks of the Church, raises the whole body of the clergy in the

estimation of the community, and in so doing imparts dignity and splendour to religion itself:—for as was said by Mr. Burke, "*the people of England do not choose to banish religion, like something we are ashamed to shew, to obscure municipalities and rustic villages: no, we will have her exalt her mitred front in courts and parliaments, we will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life, and blended with all classes of society.*" Now it is by means of our bishoprics and deaneries, and those prizes which the very inequality of our Church preferments create, that this effect, which Mr. Burke speaks of, is accomplished. "*Do but level these preferments, and your clergy,*" as Bentley says, "*will soon become as level in their learning, and instead of the flower of your English youths, you will soon have only the refuse sent to your academies. A few shining prizes in the Church, being,*" as he calls them, "*the pious frauds that induce and decoy their parents to risk their child's fortune in its service.*"

As I am here addressing an assembly consisting not only of my brethren in the ministry, but likewise of the lay officers of the Church, I have thought that these remarks, hastily as they have been put together, might not prove unacceptable at the present time, when misstatements of every kind, respecting the Church and clergy, are so industriously propagated. At the same time I am not so sanguine as to believe, that any thing which I have said, even admitting it to be just and true, will change the feeling with which the authors of those misstatements are evi-

dently actuated. "*They hated me before they hated you,*" said Christ to his apostles. It is not because a Church Establishment is useless to religion, that it has now so many active enemies, but because it is the main support of religion in this country; it is not the indolence, or ignorance, or vicious lives of churchmen, which excite that malevolence by which our order is assailed; that which is disliked is the activity, the learning, the zeal, and piety which distinguish both the heads of the Church in the present day, as well as the great majority of the parochial clergy; and the influence of which, more than any other obstacle, stands between a certain class of politicians in this country, and the designs at which they evidently aim. But the persecution of those who think and feel in this manner, is an evil which we must be content to bear with, until it shall please God to change their hearts. The present state of the public mind is not one which can be permanent: all excesses of opinion, arising out of temporary excitement, must necessarily be short-lived. In the mean time there can be no doubt as to the part which it becomes us to take. The Church has no interest in upholding abuses that are clearly proved to be such; but there are few subjects on which the voice of mere public opinion can be less safely depended upon, or in which innovation, merely as such, ought more to be resisted. I trust, then, that no blind apprehension of consequences, of which we are most fallible judges, that no temptation of fear,

the worst of counsellors in times of danger, will be made a reason for changes of any kind, not otherwise desirable; and, above all, that the clergy will not set an example of attempting to disarm the hostility of their adversaries by any mean compliances, or any compromise of the principles which they sincerely entertain. Those principles are well known; they have carried the Church through as fierce trials in former times, as any we are at present likely to encounter; and let us feel assured, that to abandon them now, will not conciliate the support of any party; but, on the contrary, will only justify the prejudices of those who wish us ill, and supply arguments which they will not fail to use against us.

But while we are careful not to yield upon any point which concerns our private integrity as churchmen, let us remember that we are not called to be statesmen and politicians, but to be overseers of the flock of Christ. And the more strictly we limit our active exertions to this our prescribed sphere of duty, the more effectually shall we contribute to that good cause which we are all anxious to uphold. Let us know nothing, so far as regards our ministerial functions, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and in all our exhortations, let it plainly appear that we have no temporal interest to serve in seeking the respect and confidence of our people, but that the main desire and prayer of our heart to God in their behalf is, that they might be saved. In this way of well doing we

shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, when other arguments, perhaps, might fail; and, at all events, come what may, our hearts and minds will be at peace. "*The earth is the Lord's, be the people never so unquiet;*" and we may be well assured that he will not abandon his Church, nor allow the hearts of our people to be alienated from her ministers, so long as they place their reliance on his protection, and do what depends upon them, to deserve it.

THE END.

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